

## **Jean Baptiste Point DuSable**

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Thousands of immigrants from all over move to Chicago every year. The constant movement of immigrants into Chicago has impacted the city in many ways. One migrant that affected Chicago in a major way was Jean Baptiste Point DuSable. DuSable was one of the first to contribute to Chicago. When DuSable settled in the Chicago area, he ended up becoming the founder of Chicago and established its spirit for economic success. He became the father of Chicago because he set up the community and attracted colonists to the area. DuSable also influenced Chicago's industrial support by setting up a trading post that dealt in most products available during his time.

Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was born in 1745 in San Marc, Haiti to a mother who was Haitian and a father who was French. While living in Haiti at an early age, he heard many stories from the French about opportunities for financial success in Louisiana. By the age of nineteen DuSable traveled to New Orleans with his friend Jacques Clamorgan to seek out those same chances. Within a year of living in New Orleans in 1764, DuSable heard of the land where the Native Americans said, "the river meets the lake." This was supposedly the perfect geographic location to set up a trading post because the Mississippi River and the Ohio River ran by it. Hence, DuSable eagerly sailed up the Mississippi River to go to Chicago in 1765. DuSable immediately started a trading post by the Chicago River, which became very prosperous. This was DuSable's first step to making an impact on Chicago's economic status.

While DuSable was in Chicago he met Chief Pontiac, the Potawatomi tribe leader. Pontiac later asked DuSable to arrange a peace treaty between all the Native American tribes of the Midwest. DuSable was very pleased about this proposal and made a meeting between all the tribes without delay. DuSable created better relations with the Native Americans, and it helped with his trading post's success. DuSable continued to thrive with his trading business and also married Kittiwaha who was a part of the Potawatomi tribe and later had a daughter and a son with her. This made DuSable's relations with the Native Americans even better, and by 1776 his trading cabin had expanded to a trading post, and then to a community with a church, and a school, which put Chicago on the map as an important economic center. If Jean did not immigrate to the Chicago area, there would have been a good chance that a different person would have settled there, and he probably would have been like most other settlers and created bad relations with the Indians. Then there would not have been good enough relations with all the Indians to make a successful trading post. DuSable was known for trading throughout the whole Midwest. DuSable mostly dealt in pork, flour, and bread to hunters, fur trappers, and settlers; he also sold manufactured items since he was skilled as a carpenter. One of the main reasons DuSable had all these skills was because of the fact that he was an immigrant. DuSable learned most of these skills as he immigrated from state to state and met new cultures. For example, DuSable learned how to make flour from the Indian tribes he met.

Chicago was not officially founded as a city until 1838, but it was Jean Baptiste Point DuSable's trading post that set up the economic and commercialized basis around which Chicago is founded. Even though DuSable died in St. Louis, Missouri he will

always be remembered for his contributions to Chicago. It took many years before DuSable was finally given the credit he deserved for founding Chicago. On August 8, 1963, Richard J. Daley, a mayor of Chicago, officially stated that the third full week of August will be called DuSable week to recognize that Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was in fact “the first Chicago resident of record.” DuSable is still considered the first settler and founder of Chicago, Illinois. [From Dominique K. Butler, "Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable: the Founder of Chicago," Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable. Dec. 1995. Illinois State Library. <<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/1995/ihy951204.html>> (Sept. 3, 2007); Garrantry Carnes, "Jean Baptiste Point DuSable," *American National Biography*; Richard J. Daley, Chicago, Office of the Mayor, City of Chicago, *DuSable Week*; and Christopher R. Reed, *Black Chicago's First Century*.]